



**Congress of Connecticut
Community Colleges**
907 Wethersfield Avenue
Hartford, CT 06114

phone: 860-296-5172
fax: 860-296-6219
e-mail: info@the4cs.org
web: www.the4cs.org

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Steve Cohen

*Vice President
Faculty*
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*Vice President
ACL's*
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Good Afternoon Co-Chairpersons and Fellow
Committee Members,

My name is Steven Cohen. I have been a member of the Norwalk Community College faculty since 1988. I have taught literally thousands of students, and I've loved every minute of my time with them. Now, I also have the pleasure of representing the members of the Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges as their president.

The 4C's, as we affectionately refer to our union, represents over 1400 full-time faculty, counselors, librarians, and student support administrators, as well as over 1100 part-time faculty and student support personnel at the state's twelve public community colleges.

On behalf of my colleagues, I am here today to ask you to consider two things.

The first is the governor's budget proposal for the community college system, which will leave the colleges with an approximately 18 million dollar, or roughly 10 per cent shortfall for next year and an approximately 21.5 million dollar, or roughly 12 per cent shortfall for the following year. Compounding these numbers is the simple fact that community college enrollments rise during times of economic distress. Enrollments are up systemwide, and by almost 10 per cent at some institutions. At my home college in Norwalk, we have our largest ever spring semester population, with over 6000 students enrolled in our

credit bearing courses, and thousands more enrolled in our non-credit courses.

By serving traditional age college students and older workers who are upgrading their skills or retraining in new areas, the state's community colleges educate both our future workforce and assist current workers to maintain, advance in, or change their careers. Our services are vital to the economic health of the state.

In the community college system, we are often exhorted to do more with less. This may be achievable from time to time when budgets and enrollments are more stable. But when resources are limited and the call for services is rising dramatically, doing more with less becomes simply too Herculean a task to ask of us.

The second item I ask you to consider is the governor's proposal to merge the community colleges with the technical high schools and with elements of other state agencies. My 4C's colleagues and I are bemused by this proposal. It may be a good idea, but it requires *serious study*. More to the point, it requires involvement of those of us who understand how our system works and what our students require. We are the ones who develop curricula and articulation agreements. We know how to create educational pathways that facilitate student success. We know what kinds of support services our students need. Yet we were not consulted.

Without careful study and planning that involves the professionals who know the goals involved, and who work to achieve those goals each day, the governor's proposal may even ending up costing more money than it purports to save.

My fellow 4C's members and I chose our careers, in large measure, because we enjoy helping others. Please give us the resources to do our jobs, and afford us the professional courtesy to be involved in any restructuring of the community college system.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to address you today.